

It started out as just a dream for two young cartoon creators. Now the whole world is...

TURNING TURTLE!

“COWABUNGA!”

That's the cry whenever those slimy green, pizza-guzzling Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles are in town.

Parents who want the respect of their kids must stay in tune with the multi-million dollar merchandising empire which has spawned myriads of comic books, a TV series and, now, a megabucks movie.

It's the latest craze among young cinemagoers in the U.S., and it opens in Australia later this year.

Forget Batman, Superman and the other has-beens — the Turtles are the world's latest folk heroes.

Turning turtles into a goldmine has proved lucrative beyond the wildest dreams of their cartoon creators, Peter Laird, 36, and Kevin Eastman, 27, who three years ago was a New York short-order cook.

With the sewers of the Big Apple as their natural home, the Turtles have mutated. Radioactive waste from their environment has enlarged these once ordinary creatures to Ninja dimensions.

They walk upright, talk uptight, are turned on by rap music — and are crimebusters par excellence.

As Ninja fighting machines, they are in a class of their own when the going gets rough.

In just two years since invading the scene as comic cartoon characters, they have karate-kicked their way to the top of America's merchandising heap. There's the



poster, the music and other items no Turtles-maniac would be without.

Kids use Turtles toothbrushes and eat, wear and sleep with other Turtles-endorsed products, all of which have made the Surge licensing company of Long Island, New York, very seriously rich.

Some teachers and child psychologists come down on the side of the Turtles as a positive influence on young people. They have given their mutual approval and made the Turtles respectable in the eyes of

ABOVE: Turtles on the attack . . . it's out of the sewers and into the streets of New York, and there are no holds barred when it comes to dealing with the baddies.

their elders. They are winners, the little guys waging war against evil and beating the bullies.

The four Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, named after Renaissance painters, are Donatello, Raphael, Leonardo and Michelangelo.

They wear Ninja headbands and carry the traditional weapons.

Wrongdoers who cross paths with the quartet are dealt with in true

MOCK TURTLE SCOOP!

Ninja style, with no holds barred.

The Martial Arts Master of the quartet is Master Splinter — a giant rat. Their enemy is the Shredder, a Darth Vader clone.

The Ninja Turtles do battle with his evil minions, who set about their victims with hockey sticks. Street-wise and vicious, they are members of New York's infamous Foot gang.

When Splinter is kidnapped, our heroes rescue him and release Shredder's unwilling teen soldiers from his power.

Aiding, hindering and abetting our Turtles rescue squad are such human characters as April O'Neill, a feisty TV news reporter, and street vigilante Casey Jones.

Splinter, Shredder and the Turtles are the bywords for today's wisened-up kids. Miss out and you're dead as yesterday's news. Catch on and you're part of the coolest cult in town. Their theme song says it all.

With 600 separate products already licensed, there's more to come. You can wear the T-shirt, read the books, use the transfers.

A booming U.S. opening week-



ABOVE: Michelangelo in a relaxed mood at "home" — the sewers of New York.

LEFT: Leonardo clowns with Leslie Fellows, one of the crew who worked on the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles movie.

end for the movie set every box-office record toppling.

The movie scored 60 per cent of the total U.S. independent market for the first quarter of 1990, making Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles the most successful independent production in the history of motion pictures.

Heading the film's live-action cast are Judith Hoag and Elias Koteas, with voices supplied by

courtesy of Hollywood teen heart-throb Corey Feldman.

While the story is set in New York City with its characters (including the Turtles) portrayed by Americans, behind-the-scenes work was done by Britishers.

Making the film for Golden Harvest was Britain's Limelight Productions, with Brits masterminding its technical ingenuity, headed by Simon Fields (producer) and helmed by youthful director Steve Barron. The theme music was the work of Britisher John Du Prez.

Adding to the spirit of Anglo-American co-operation, the main stars — including Turtles, Splinter and Shredder — were the work of London-based Creature Shop, owned by the late Jim Henson.

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